

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin National Guard assisting with COVID-19 vaccine distribution

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CONTACT: Maj. Joe Trovato | ngwi.pao@mail.mil | 608-242-3048

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by Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

MADISON, Wis. — A small team of Citizen Soldiers and Airmen from the Wisconsin National Guard are assisting this week with distribution of the state's first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines.

Approximately 20 troops are helping manage vaccine inventory at undisclosed sites across the state.

Those troops are serving in a support role in coordination with other state partners and agencies helping to roll out the vaccine - including the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Wisconsin Emergency Management, the Wisconsin State Patrol, and others, as the state seeks to vaccinate frontline healthcare workers.

The National Guard troops represent a small, but critical element of the effort, as they assist in handling the inventory of the initial supply of vaccines and preparing them for delivery to facilities that need them.

The Guard is not conducting vaccine transport or security missions at this time.

“The Soldiers and Airmen of the Wisconsin National Guard continue to step up to do

whatever our state asks of them during this pandemic,” said Maj. Gen. Paul Knapp, Wisconsin’s adjutant general. “We’re proud to assist our partner agencies and our fellow citizens in this small, but critical role to get the vaccine distributed as efficiently as possible.”

In another COVID-related update, the Wisconsin National Guard this week concluded its mission to staff a state call center that informed residents of their COVID-19 test results. Dozens of Wisconsin National Guard members had staffed the call center since the spring when mass community-based testing began in earnest.

In the initial months of community-based testing, testing teams collected information manually and the call center followed up with test results. As the state implemented new registration technology at COVID testing sites, the need for a call center decreased, and now most test results arrive via text or e-mail. Wisconsin Guard members placed nearly 560,000 calls from the call center to confer test results.

The Wisconsin National Guard has played an important role in the state’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March, more than 1,600 Wisconsin Guard members have served in a variety of roles. The Wisconsin National Guard has administered nearly one million COVID-19 tests statewide since April. Others staffed a warehouse that managed shipments of personal protective equipment, while some provided medical and administrative support at self-isolation facilities in the early stages of the pandemic, among other missions.

Thousands more staffed polling sites in four separate Wisconsin elections since April, as pandemic fears resulted in mass shortages of volunteers at polling locations around the state.